
Library residencies and internships as indicators of success: evidence from three programs

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This paper discusses post-master's degree internships in three very different organizations; the University of Illinois at Chicago, the National Library of Medicine, and the Library of Congress. It discusses the internships using several questions. Do the programs serve as a recruitment strategy? Do the programs develop key competencies needed by the participant or organization? Do the programs develop leaders and managers? Is acceptance into a program an indicator of future career success? A survey was mailed to 520 persons who had completed internships in one of the three programs. There was a 49.8% response rate. Responses to fifty-four questions were tabulated and analyzed for each program and for the total group. The results confirm the value of internships to the career of participants.

INTRODUCTION

The profession of librarianship has been undergoing even more than the normal amount of self-analysis in the last few years. Technological and economical factors have converged in the last five years to the point that "visioning" the librarian of the future has become a common activity of professional and administrative leaders. Core competencies are a frequent topic of conversation in professional circles. The educational objectives of the library and information science curriculum are under increasing scrutiny [1]. The authors wanted to study one aspect of this complex picture. This paper discusses post-master's degree internships in three organizations. It discusses the internships using several questions. Do the programs serve as a recruitment strategy? Do the programs develop key competencies needed by the participant or organization? Do the programs develop leaders and managers? Is acceptance into a program an indicator of future career success? In some sense, success may be in the eye of the beholder. However, the authors measure suc-

cess in this study by the total record of employment, including the level of responsibility, publication record, research activity, record of professional service, and career satisfaction.

The post-graduate internship program is typically designed not only as a recruitment device but also to help new professionals better define strengths and career goals and to accelerate their professional development. Although the master's degree program provides the "union card" for practice in the field, on-the-job training is also required because of the complexities of specific operations in some library environments. Also, while field work or a practicum are required in some graduate library school programs, these experiences do not compare with the scope and complexity of library operations experienced in full-time post-master's degree internships.* Educational programs offered during the internship

* For a summary of the benefits and limitations of practicum offerings see COBURN L., *Classroom and field: the internship in American library education*. Flushing, NY: Queens College Press, 1980.

period also add to the depth and breadth of experiences librarians bring to their careers.

In 1995, John B. Berry, then director of the post-master's degree residency program at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Library, compiled an unpublished report on early guidelines for such programs. He described the effort in 1983 of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), an American Library Association (ALA) division, and the American Association of Library Schools (AALS, now the Association for Library and Information Science Education, ALISE) to draft a statement of "Recommended Guidelines for a Post-Masters Internship Program." Although never formally adopted by either association, the guidelines provided the philosophical framework for several programs implemented in academic libraries after 1980.

A revised "Guidelines for Post-Masters Degree Resident Programs" (1984) provided additional perspectives that have influenced programs to the present time. Key among these guidelines were that programs should report on diversity efforts; that the residency should be for a one-year period with the possibility of a one-year extension if mutually agreeable; that the residency should not be considered a probationary employment period; that the employing institution or organization should be large enough to manage the program effectively, including its educational component; and that the resident compensation should be equivalent to other beginning professional salaries.[†] In 1992 and 1996, ALISE published its "Guidelines for Practices and Principles in the Design, Operation, and Evaluation of Post-Master's Residency Programs" [2, 3]. These guidelines were indebted to efforts begun in the 1980s to ensure the quality of post-master's degree internships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identifying predictors or indicators of success for a certain category of workers, professional and others, has been a topic of research for numerous investigators. In 1961, Baillie did his dissertation on admissions criteria at one library school and the relationship to job success [4]. Olsgaard investigated the characteristics of success among academic librarians [5]. The complexities of defining success were the subject of a quick response letter to Olsgaard's study [6]. Anderson's study in 1985 discussed the characteristics of academic librarian "leaders" compared to a control group [7].

In a 1995 memo on ALA letterhead, Brewer reported on an American Library Association/Office of Library Personnel Resources (ALA/OLPR) survey of former

post-master's of library science (MLS) residents that was conducted in 1994. Brewer had earlier compiled an Association of Research Libraries (ARL) SPEC Kit on residency programs in ARL libraries [8]. Her report dated June 30, 1995, summarized responses from 109 former residents about their post-MLS residency experiences. A full report was published in the November 1997 issue of *College & Research Libraries* [9]. She noted, among other things, the overwhelming enthusiasm of respondents about the residency programs and concluded that such programs were effective recruitment tools, including the attraction of minority librarians to careers in librarianship. Survey results were "inconclusive on how residency programs affect individual career patterns." ARL has had a long-standing interest in post-master's degree residencies—in recruitment generally and in recruitment of under-represented groups specifically. ARL's *Leading Ideas* issue number 4 provided an update on "Implementing Post-Masters Residency Programs" [10].

Studies of career success use many different criteria. And, as some responses in letters to the editors point out, the criteria used often focus on external issues and exclude personal strengths and competencies. While this present study does not use the methodology or criteria of previous studies, the authors have profited from the observations of these studies.

STUDY PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The three post-MLS programs in this study were selected in part because of personal experience and exposure related to program participants or to employers. They were also selected because the sponsoring institutions or organizations were national in scope but very different in emphasis.

University of Illinois at Chicago Academic Resident Librarian Program

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Academic Resident Librarian Program offers formal post-MLS library education experience for entry-level professionals who are graduates of library and information science education programs across the United States and Canada. Established by the UIC library administration in 1981 as an informal half-time "internship," the program has evolved into a permanent structured "residency" experience, consisting of one-year appointments (renewable for one year) in one or more of the library's operational departments. The program has consisted of an orientation program, seminars on current library issues, Chicago-area library and association site visits, modest support for attendance at professional meetings, and structured social gatherings.

[†] How this relates to salaries for residents in other professions would make for an interesting inquiry.

National Library of Medicine Associate Fellowship Program

The U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM) Associate Fellowship Program is a one year postgraduate training experience to prepare librarians for future leadership roles in health sciences libraries. The program has two phases. In Phase I, the associates receive training from all components of NLM on such topics as computer-based skills, bibliographic control, collection building, and research and development in information systems and technology. In Phase II, the associates select two to three projects of a three to six month duration, working with a staff member for guidance. The NLM Associate Fellowship Program is open to library and information professionals and graduate students completing their degrees. October 1997 marked the fortieth anniversary of the NLM Associate Fellowship Program and the program is planned to increase in size and duration. NLM Associate Fellows are recruited nationally and competitively. Former fellows have gone on to a range of leadership positions in academic health sciences centers, hospitals, information service companies, drug companies, graduate schools of library and information science, and national libraries.‡ Qualifications include a master's degree in library or information science and U.S. citizenship, and some experience is desired but not required. Carle has done a longitudinal study of NLM associates from 1957 to 1990 and pointed to the value of the program for recruitment into health sciences librarianship generally and for NLM specifically [11].

A news release from NLM on September 29, 1997, announced a major expansion of the NLM Associate Fellowship Program. In making the announcement, Lindberg said, "At a time when the delivery of health care is undergoing massive changes, it is critical that we acknowledge and support the contributions of those professionals who are mapping and navigating the health information superhighway—medical librarians" [12]. The expansion of the NLM Associate Fellowship Program has been one outgrowth of a long range planning report on the education and training of health sciences librarians commissioned by NLM's Board of Regents. DeBakey, chairman of NLM's Regents, stated, "Health sciences librarians play a vital role in making medical information accessible to health professionals and, increasingly, to the general public. Society benefits when these librarians are well equipped to participate in the design, development, and delivery of health information systems" [13]. The authors of this paper believe the comments of Dr. Lindberg and Dr. DeBakey apply equally well to the

education and training of all librarians in this information age and particularly to the purpose of post-master's degree programs.

Library of Congress Intern Program

The U.S. Library of Congress (LC) Intern Program has been designed to recruit outstanding library school graduates for a career at LC and to broaden career opportunities for outstanding LC staff members. The program encompasses seminars, rotating jobs, or orientations to different operational areas of LC. Qualifications include an MLS from an ALA-accredited institution with a ranking in the upper 25% of the class, and U.S. citizenship. Other factors influencing selection include the library school dean's nomination, academic performance, personal qualities, leadership potential, and interest or competencies in foreign languages, technology, management, and other library functional areas.

In 1966, Goodrum, an LC intern in 1949, published an assessment of whether or not LC was getting its money's worth in its special recruit program [14]. He concluded that the program was meeting its objectives and that it was indeed cost-effective. Personal communication from an employee of LC in January 1997 indicated that the LC Intern Program had not been active for a few years. The latest LC intern responding completed the LC internship in 1982.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the survey portion of this study was to get feedback from the three groups of interns about their respective programs. In simple terms, the survey questions were formulated to get evaluative comments about the library post-graduate internships in five basic categories:

1. the role of the internship in finding a job
2. the role of the internship in developing key competencies
3. the role of the internship in development as a manager or leader
4. the role of the internship in professional recognition and success
5. the relative satisfaction of the respondents with the internship programs

Three groups of librarians were identified according to their internship (postgraduate) experience: UIC residents, NLM associates, and LC interns. Selecting the population to survey was straightforward. An up-to-date list of UIC residents was compiled from announcements since the program began in 1981. The survey was sent to 59 persons for whom a current address was available (of approximately 65 total). For NLM associates, a current directory was available, *National Library of Medicine Directory of NLM Associates*

‡ Information and applications for the NLM program may be viewed at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/about/training/nlmassoc.htm>.

Table 1
Population and responses

Program	Total	Current address available	Number returned not delivered	Number of responses	% of all graduates	Mailing response rate
UIC residents	65	59	3	31	47.7%	55.4%
NLM associates	155	135	1	76	49.0%	56.7%
LC interns	300	103	8	35	11.7%	36.8%
Total	520	297	12	142	27.3%	49.8%

1957–1996, and the survey was sent to 135 persons with current addresses (of a total of 155). The LC intern population selected was the most problematic in that no current listing was found. The *Library of Congress Intern Program Directory* (1982) was used in conjunction with LC intern announcements in the *LC Information Bulletin*. Of approximately 300 interns during the years 1955 to 1985, current addresses could be found for only 103. This occurrence was understandable since many of the 1950s to 1960s interns likely have retired or left the profession. The data in Table 1 suggests the return rate for the LC intern group was poor because the data was old and the procedure for obtaining current addresses was less satisfactory.

There was only one mailing of the questionnaire to each group. Stamped, self-addressed return envelopes were included. The questionnaire covered several basic areas of the internship experience including basic demographic information for each group, information about skills and competencies development, and general information about career and professional accomplishments. Data from returned questionnaires were entered into an SPSS file for tabulation, statistical computations, and subsequent interpretation.

RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the study population and responses. Five hundred and twenty persons were identified as graduates of the three post-MLS programs. Questionnaires were sent to 297 persons: 59 UIC residents, 135 NLM associates, and 103 LC interns for whom current addresses were found. Twelve surveys were undeliverable. A total of 142 people returned completed questionnaires about their respective programs: these included 31 UIC residents, 76 NLM associates, and 35 LC interns. Of the 520 graduates, completed surveys were received from 27%. Of the deliverable surveys, 49.8% were returned.

General observations

Female respondents outnumbered males more than two to one. Yet, for the LC intern group, more males

Table 2
Date of MLS

Dates	UIC residents	NLM associates	LC interns	Totals
1958–1969	0	12	16	28
1970–1979	1	24	16	41
1980–1989	20	27	2	49
1990–1995	10	13	0	23
Totals	31	76	34	141

(19) responded than females (16). Also for the LC group, none of the respondents was under forty years of age—no doubt reflecting the duration of the program and its decline in recent years. Ethnicity did not appear to be a major factor in the program experience—although about 15% of NLM associates and about 10% of UIC residents represented ethnic minorities. One question in the survey asked whether or not the individual's post-MLS internship had special provisions or incentives for the recruitment of minorities. The NLM interns had the best knowledge of minority recruitment in that particular program with nearly 70% reporting that they knew of such provisions or incentives. It should be noted that the NLM program often actively recruited minority applicants from ALA-accredited programs in library science each year and at national conferences such as the annual Medical Library Association (MLA), ALA, and Special Libraries Association (SLA) meetings. Only 22% of LC interns were aware of minority provisions or incentives and, finally, a bare 10% of UIC interns were aware of incentives or provisions for minorities.

Any attempt at assessing career success must take into account the linear position of respondents in their careers. Using the completion of the MLS as the career entry point, the earliest date reported was 1958 and the latest date was 1995. The mean was 1978. Table 2 summarizes the date the MLS was completed for each group. Regarding the internship experience specifically, the earliest year reported was 1961 and the latest was 1996. The mean was 1980. The fact that almost 70% of LC respondents were fifty years of age or older was further indication of career linear position for this group.

Interesting to the authors were the library schools that produced the most graduates for the three internship programs studied. Respondents were MLS graduates of sixty-four library schools. The University of Chicago, University of Michigan, and University of California, Los Angeles, were each represented in the survey by ten respondents. Eight respondents received their MLS from the University of Washington. There were seven graduates each from the University of California–Berkeley, Catholic University of America, University of Illinois, Indiana University, and the Univer-

sity of Pittsburgh. These nine schools produced over 50% of program participants responding to the survey.

RESULTS OF SURVEY BY OBJECTIVE

Finding a job

The first objective of the survey addressed the role of the program experience in finding a job. Nine items addressed this objective. The first set of items addressed the importance of finding immediate employment, gaining experience, developing a specialization, preparing for library management, and networking. Responses were measured on a five point scale with "1 = Not at all important, 2 = Not very important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very important, and 5 = Extremely important." For the purposes of reporting, the authors grouped the 3, 4, and 5 responses together with the rationale that the decision of the individual that the item was important was the most essential criteria and that degrees of importance were extremely subjective and therefore less critical.

Of particular note was the fact that over 90% of respondents (125) indicated that gaining experience was an important issue in applying for a program. This issue was followed by the equally important issues of developing professional contacts (networking) and specialization in librarianship, both at over 80% of respondents (111). Preparing for a management position was important to over 70% of respondents (98), while finding immediate employment was an important issue to over 65% of respondents (92).

The completion of a program was judged as a factor in getting their current position by only 67.9% of respondents (95). It was possible that the number was not higher simply because at the time they entered the profession, most new and recent graduates or programs were not finding difficulty getting a position. The response to this question when broken down by program was particularly telling. Less than half of UIC interns felt that completing that program was a factor in getting their current position, while more than three quarters of LC interns felt that completing that program was a factor in getting their current position.

Advancement or promotion as a result of completing the program was judged a factor by 75.5% of respondents (105). In other words, three-quarters of respondents viewed the program as a positive influence upon career or position advancement. However, even given that response, only 31.9% (45) could definitely say that they had received a salary increase that was directly related to completing a program. Of course, an additional 14.2% (20) did not know if there was a connection in completing a program and getting a salary increase, so this question is at best a difficult one to answer. However, 62.4% of respondents (88) said that they did receive an increase in recognition be-

cause of completion of a program. So, it appears that while respondents recognized the value of a program in gaining experience to prepare for their career, the role of a program in obtaining employment was seen as less direct.

Key competency development

The second objective of the survey attempted to discover whether the programs developed key competencies needed by the profession. The competencies and skills selected were viewed as important by the authors and representative of those reported as important in the library literature. In some respects, responses represented baseline data from the employee perspective to be compared to data reported in the literature from the employer perspective. Eleven items addressed this objective using the same five point scale. Perhaps predictably, professional attitude and socialization was judged to be important by 92.1% of respondents (129). Learning methods of information delivery got the important nod from 81.2% of respondents (112), as did knowledge of computer systems, hardware, and software (112). It was somewhat surprising that this was not first, but a breakdown of responses by program shows that LC brought the average down considerably, most likely because most respondents graduated before computers were considered essential to libraries.

Only 27.5% of respondents (38) found that their respective programs developed their teaching methods and curriculum development skills. This response rate can probably also be attributed to the fact that, even in situations where librarians do have academic rank, the bulk of their time is spent in practice and not in teaching or curriculum development (unless they are reference librarians perhaps). Likewise only 50.3% of respondents (70) found the programs important to them in gaining competence in bibliography, cataloging, and classification. Perhaps most respondents felt that gaining of these skills is more the purview of the library school program, with individual specialization given more weight at the post-graduate level.

For the rest of the skill items from the knowledge of general or specialized reference or information sources to research methods to personnel management to communication skills to project design, the level of importance assigned to each in terms of the programs varied only slightly with a little over two-thirds of the respondents deciding that the skills gained were important and were developed by the programs. Table 3 summarizes competencies or skills and the level of importance attached to them by respondents.

Most significant was that 90% of respondents (127) felt that the skills learned or practiced in their internship or residency were used in their current job. Of those commenting on skill use in their present jobs,

Table 3
Skills

Competency/skill	% Scoring important or higher
Professional attitude and socialization	92.1
Information delivery	81.2
Computers/systems	81.2
Specialized reference	79.0
Project design/management	73.9
Human resources management	71.5
General reference	70.4
Writing/communication	67.4
Research methods	66.9
Cataloging	50.3
Teaching	27.5

49.6% indicated most skills developed in the programs were used and 40.4% indicated some skills were used. Surprisingly, 9.9% indicated the skills were not used at all. In general, the key competencies identified in this survey were well developed by the programs, in particular those related to professionalism, information delivery, and information systems, as well as the fact that the perception of the individuals in these programs was that they learned needed, valuable, and still useful skills.

Leadership development

The role of the program in developing managers and leaders was the third objective of the survey. When asked to describe their current positions, 39% of respondents (55) identified themselves as a department head or director/manager. There was a large number of "other" responses. Among the other present positions reported were network/systems (13), administrative assistant/budget manager (11), subject specialist (8), and teacher/instructional services (8). Possibly, the definition of traditional leadership positions was too narrow in this instance. Was the issue of preparation for library management positions important to respondents in deciding to apply for a program? Over 72% of respondents (99) agreed that it was. Only 55% of respondents recorded leadership activity by virtue of an elected or appointed position or by serving as a committee chair in a professional organization. Of course, some of the more recent graduates of post-MLS programs will become leaders in the future.

Career success

Career success is an extremely subjective concept, but the fourth objective of the survey was to see if respondents thought that the program contributed to their success. For the purposes of this paper, the authors measured career success in terms of number of publications in refereed journals, total number of publi-

cations (excluding book reviews), professional activities, and personal satisfaction.

The line between refereed publications and total publications was marked. More than 40% of all respondents (53) did not have any refereed publications, however in the NLM and UIC programs more than 60% of the individuals in each program had at least one refereed publication. In the total publications question, the number of respondents who did not have any publications dropped to less than 24% (30). Looking at the numbers by program revealed that for the most part individuals who participated in a program did publish, although not necessarily in refereed publications. Serving on an editorial board turned out to be a fairly common experience among respondents who went through the LC internship. More than 40% of LC respondents indicated that they had served on an editorial board for at least two years. NLM and UIC programs had around a 20% positive response rate to this question with UIC respondents serving fewer years overall than the LC interns.

ALA was the most popular professional organization to belong to with over 57% of respondents as members. Next came MLA with over 36% of respondents as members. Third was SLA with just over 11% of respondents as members. Fourth was the American Society of Information Scientists with 8% of respondents as members and finally the Law Library Association at less than 1%. In this question, "other professional organizations" was a choice and state or regional library associations were the most frequently listed. By program, of course, more NLM respondents had MLA as their top choice, with ALA as their second choice, and SLA as their third; while UIC and LC respondents had ALA as their first choice, then MLA, and then SLA.

Professional service as an elected or appointed official or committee chair was achieved by more than 55% overall of respondents. By program, LC respondents were at the high end of the spectrum with over 69% performing service. UIC fell in the middle, with over 61% performing service, and NLM followed with 48% performing service.

On a three-point scale, 99%, all but two, of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current position, as well as with their career.

Program satisfaction

Satisfaction with the program in which each respondent participated was the fifth objective of the survey with five questions addressing this issue. Again on the same three-point scale, that expectations were met in the programs was indicated positively by 97.9% of respondents (137). Of these, 80% indicated that the programs met their expectations "very well" and 17.9%

indicated that expectations were met "somewhat." That the programs satisfied participants was indicated positively by 98.6% of respondents (139). That the programs expressed a clear purpose was indicated positively by 99.3% of respondents. That the programs met program goals was indicated positively by 97.9% of respondents; and, finally, that the individual's work in the program was considered essential or worthwhile was indicated positively by 99.3% of respondents. The overall high marks in this portion of the survey indicated that according to this sample these programs were well thought out with purposes and goals clearly defined and the participants' expectations and satisfaction assured.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This survey attempted to elicit from the respondents answers that would allow the authors to evaluate the following: the role of the internship in finding a job, the role of the internship in developing key competencies, the role of the internship in development as a manager or leader, the role of the internship in professional recognition and success, and the relative satisfaction of the respondents with the internship program.

Although respondents seemed to agree that the reason they entered the internship was to gain experience, network, and acquire the skills that would allow them to specialize in their careers, few seemed to see the internship as a step toward finding immediate employment. Perhaps this was because for the time being and in the recent past, there have been employment opportunities for librarians.

The development of key competencies in these programs is most important in this fluctuating time of being a librarian. In many ways, it seems as though the needed key competencies are still being identified. Refreshing to note is that the majority of the respondents feel that the programs provide them with necessary key competencies that they still use.

The preparation of leaders in any given profession is a worthy endeavor. Although the numbers of respondents identifying themselves as traditionally titled managers and leaders is relatively small in this study, with the many different ways that librarian jobs are titled and the many different duties that accompany each title, it is perhaps easiest to say that the programs may have had an impact in this arena that is not fully recognized by the respondents themselves. A more generous interpretation of leader or manager in this instance is warranted. A follow up study perhaps linking leadership with professional activity and asking for job particulars such as "How many individuals do you supervise?" may begin to get at a more definitive answer.

Career success is such a subjective concept that mea-

suring conclusively how much the programs contributed to the respondents' success is difficult. By using whether or not an individual has published and their level of professional activity as a yardstick, the respondents have enjoyed for the most part a good measure of career success. More importantly, all but two of the respondents have self-identified their current position as well as their career as being satisfactory to them. Perhaps that response rate is the best description of career success.

Finally, respondents overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with their particular program. Expectations were met, program goals were clear and achieved, and respondents felt that the work they performed in the internship was essential or worthwhile. The evidence suggested that the residency and intern programs, and the individuals that go through them, were successful.

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